

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-05 SSO-00 RSC-01 DRC-01 OC-06 CCO-00

PA-04 PRS-01 SAM-01 L-03 NSC-07 NSCE-00 /048 W

----- 039545

O 171035Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9365

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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STATE FOR AF/C

USIA FOR IAA, IPS, IBS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL

SUBJ: ALI-FOREMAN FIGHT FACES POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT

1. GEORGE FOREMAN WAS CUT OVER RIGHT EYE, ALONG BONE BELOW THE EYEBROW, SEPTEMBER 16 DURING A SPARRING SESSION. AT THAT MOMENT, HIS MANAGER, DICK SADLER, ASKED FOR A POSTPONEMENT.

2. SITUATION NOT YET CLEAR, BUT POSTPONEMENT -- OR CANCELLATION -- FIGHT SEEMS INEVITABLE.

3. ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES APPARENTLY SHUT OFF ALL INTERNATIONAL TELEX AND TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS TO U.S. AFTER INCIDENT. ONLY EXCEPTIONS WERE JOHN VINOCUR OF AP AND LARRY MERCHANT OF NEW YORK POST, WHO WERE ABLE TO FILE IMMEDIATELY AFTER INJURY AND BEFORE EXTENT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INCIDENT BECAME KNOWN TO ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES. (EMBASSY PRESUMES THAT VOA PIECE A.M. SEPT 17 BASED ON AP STORY). HOWEVER, EMBASSY STILL HAS NO FIRM WORD OF POSTPONEMENT. SPORTS WRITERS ARE PREDICTING POSTPONEMENT OF ONE

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TO THREE MONTHS, BUT ZAIRIANS AND ORGANIZERS HAVE

ISSUED NO FIRM WORD AS YET. GOZ HAS LIFTED COMMUNICATIONS BLACKOUT AND TUESDAY MORNING AZAP BULLETIN CARRIES STORY, STATING THAT FIGHT "COULD BE POSTPONED FOR SEVERAL DAYS". ANY RPT ANY POSTPONEMENT WOULD CREATE MAJOR PROBLEMS FOR GOZ AND FOR AMERICAN AND BRITISH PROMOTERS OF FIGHT AND FESTIVAL, NECESSITATING REARRANGEMENT OF CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION FRANCHISES AND CONSEQUENT CONFLICT WITH OTHER SCHEDULED EVENTS, NEED FOR MAJOR STARS SUCH AS JAMES BROWN TO FULFILL OTHER COMMITMENTS ELSEWHERE, ETC.

4. ZAIRIAN TREATMENT OF AMERICAN PRESS WAS INEPT AND HEAVYHANDED. THIS INCLUDED ATTEMPTS TO PERSUADE FOREMAN CAMP NOT TO TALK TO PRESS AFTER INITIAL SADLER STATEMENT REQUESTING POSTPONEMENT. USIS OFFICER, IN COMPANY OF AP AND WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENTS, RUDELY TOLD TO LEAVE FOREMAN CAMP. ZAIRIAN MEMBER OF ALI-FOREMAN COMMISSION CALLED NEARBY GENDARMES TO CONVINCE PRESS TO LEAVE, THOUGH SADLER APPARENTLY WILLING TO TALK.

5. SUDDEN "GENERAL BREAKDOWN" (DESCRIBED BY OVERSEAS TELEPHONE OPERATORS AS "PANNE GENERALE") OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS LED DICK YOUNG NEW YORK DAILY NEWS TO CALL ZAIRE A "POLICE STATE" AND SAID HE WOULD WRITE JUST THAT.

6. ZAIRE FORTUNATE THAT ONLY HANDFUL OF AMERICAN PRESS HERE NOW -- MAJORITY IS EXPECTED TO DEBARK TUESDAY AFTERNOON.

7. ALTHOUGH EXTENT OF FOREMAN INJURY NOT YET ASCERTAINED, REPORTS INDICATE THAT CUT WENT THROUGH TWO LAYERS OF SKIN, AND, ACCORDING TO ZAIRIAN DOCTOR, "IN ONE WEEK'S TIME, A MODERATE BLOW COULD REOPEN THE CUT".

8. AT PRESENT, NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS OF ATTEMPTING POSTPONE OR CANCEL FIGHT. ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES ARE CONFERRING WITH PROMOTER DON KING WHO IS HERE IN KINSHASA AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONFER WITH PRESIDENT OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HEMDALE LEISURE CORPORATION, JOHN DALY, WHO ARRIVED LAST NIGHT.

9. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS HAVE BEEN "REESTABLISHED" AND USIS HAS FILED TELEX REPORT USINFO 170700Z.

10. IN ANY EVENT, DECISION SHOULD BE FORTHCOMING

WITHIN 48 HOURS. (ALI REP INFORMS BY PHONE THEY
"SHOULD KNOW SOMETHING" SOMETIME TOMORROW).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ALI-FOREMAN FIGHT, CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974KINSHA07909
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740260-0080
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740939/aaaabhfb.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <06 MAR 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALI-FOREMAN FIGHT FACES POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT
TAGS: SCUL, CG, US, (FOREMAN, GEORGE), (ALI, MOHAMED)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005